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No. 407

The Mysterious Will

AN ORIGINAL PLAYLET IN ONE ACT

BY

HAROLD SELMAN

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Under the title of "AT 2 A.M."

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NEW YORK
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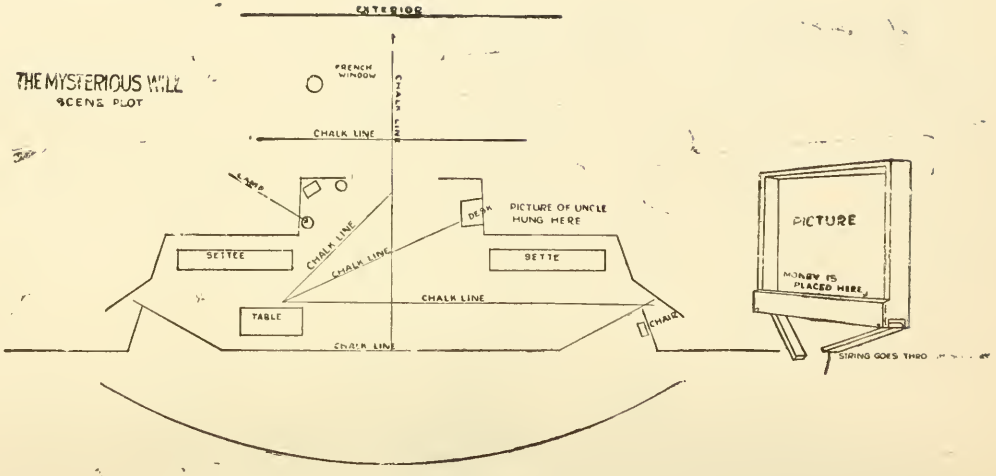
CAST OF CHARACTERS

BETTY MARSDON.....*Edgar Winston's Ward*
BILLY KENT } ..*Edgar Winston's Nephews*
DURKIN WINSTON }


THE MYSTERIOUS WILL
SCENE PLOT
EXTERIOR
FRENCH WINDOW
CHALK LINE
CHALK LINE
DOOR
PICTURE OF UNCLE HUNG HERE
CHALK LINE
CHALK LINE
SETTEE
SETTE
CHALK LINE
TABLE
CHAIR
CHALK LINE
PICTURE
MONEY IS PLACED HERE
STRING GOES THRO

THE MYSTERIOUS WILL

SCENE: *Plain interior doors, doors* R. 1 *and* R. 3, L. 1. *French window center. Table* R. C. *on a line with* R. 1. *Settee above* R. 1. *Desk above* L. 1. *Chairs* R. *Large picture of an old man facing audience on flat above* L.

Stage dark at rise, except for blue light back of French window. Gong rings twelve. A shot is fired off R. 1 *and the lock falls off the door.*

Enter DURKIN, *crosses up to* C. D., *looks out—looks about room, closes door, puts settee in front of it, turns on lamps—light up—takes a large blue paper from his pocket, crosses to center.*

DURKIN. Yes, that's right. This is the room. *(Reads)* "By condition of this will prepared this day for me, Edgar Winston, you are to follow the directions herein given implicity." Well, that's a fool of a way to make a will. *(Looks at picture* L. 1.*)* There's his picture—huh. *(Reads)* "You are to read no farther ahead than one sentence. Follow the direction, then read the next." *(Cross back of table)* Well, he left a lot of money, so I'll follow it because I want it. What's my next move?

(Reads) "You will find at your feet a chalk line leading to a desk. Follow it." *(Looks at chalk line—he does so. Reads)* "You are now in front of a desk." You idiot, anybody knows that. *(Reads)* "Open the desk——" *(He does so)* "You will find a small black box." *(Takes out box)* Oh, this is what he left me, eh? *(Tries to open it, reads)* "Put the box in your pocket, follow the chalk line to the hall." *(He crosses to door center)* "You are not to move until exactly twelve fifteen, then follow the chalk line until you reach the staircase." *(Gong strikes)* That's it. *(Exits center to left)*

BILLY. *(Appears at French window, opens it with key and enters. Looks at watch)* Well, I'm on time—so far I'm right. Now let's see—— *(Takes paper)* "At your feet you will find a chalk line leading to your right, follow it." *(X to table—reads)* "You are now standing at a table."—Well, how did he ever guess it? *(Reads)* "Turn to your left and walk ten paces." *(He does so. Reads)* "You are now ten steps from where you were." *(Looks at picture)* Thanks—thanks for the information. *(Still reading)* "Turn and follow the chalk line to the other side of the room." Uncle always did make me walk the chalk line. *(X to wash stand. Reads)* "You are now in front of a settee."—Hope he asks me to take a rest. *(Reads)* "Under the pillow you will find a small black box." *(Looks—takes up small ring box)* Well, he left me something anyway. Doesn't look like it would hold more than a nickel, but here goes. *(Tries to open it)* No, it don't—well, if I ever make a will, I'll put my money in the bank, so that people won't have to walk four miles into the country to get it. *(Reads)* "Put the box in your pocket, move the settee away from the door. *(Moves settee. Reads)*

Now follow the chalk line to the hall. *(X up to* C. D.*)* At 12:30 follow the hall to the staircase, and from there to the coal bin." I'll bet my next move will be to the ash can. *(Gong rings. He exits)*

BETTY. *(Enters* R. 1.*)* Oh, what a weird idea. Why Mr. Winston couldn't have given me what he wanted to without all this trouble, I don't know, but he said I'd get something worth while. Now let's see. *(Takes out paper)* Yes, it's right there—so far things have been just as he said. I heard the shot, and the door was open for me. *(Reads)* "You are now standing at a table."—I am not. *(Reads)* Oh, I skipped something. *(Reads)* "Walk four paces." *(Walks)* "You are now standing at a table." *(Reads)* "Open the drawer in the table and you will find a key——"*(Opens drawer)* Yes, here it is—"At your feet you will find a chalk line, follow it fifteen paces to your left——" *(She walks fifteen paces. Reads)* "Rap three times on the wall——" *(She raps—three raps are answered from the other side—Screams)* Oh, the place is haunted. I wish I could have brought someone with me, but it says I must come alone, and tell no one the conditions of this will. Well, I don't like any of it—but—— *(Reads)* "Follow the chalk line to the hall." *(X left)* "At exactly a quarter of one, follow the hall to the staircase and——" *(Gong rings)* I know Mr. Winston must have been crazy. *(Exits center to right)*

BILLY. *(Enters* R. 3—*X to* C. *Following line, turns down stage to center)* Uncle, you are kidding me beautifully, I can see right now you're not going to leave me a dollar, but why rub it in? *(Reads)* "You will now move the settee to where you found it in front of the door." *(Moves stand)* Just as you say, Uncle. If I could have brought someone

with me, I'd have lots of fun, but I'm not to tell a soul. *(Gong rings one)* Gee, I'm late. *(Reads. Walks like soldier following line to* L. 1, *military turn, crosses to front of desk, military turn, crosses to* L. 3, *military turn, and exits)*

DURKIN. *(Enters* L. 1. *Head down, looking at chalk line)* I heard the rap all right, there must be someone else here. *(Sees settee)* No, they didn't come in there. *(Turns, looks at picture)* You old idiot! Well, he said there was something here for me and I'm going to find it. *(Follows line to in front of table—turns, follows chalk line to left—meeting Betty center—they bump into each other)*

BETTY. *(Enters* L. 1. *Screams)*

DURKIN. God—Betty!

BETTY. Oh, I'm glad to see someone. *(*DURKIN *puts out his arms as if to take her)* Even you. *(*DURKIN *steps back—Both hide papers behind them)* What are you doing here?

DURKIN. I see what it means now—it's you.

BETTY. Yes, it's *me,* but I don't see what it means.

DURKIN. You've been sent here for me.

BETTY. *(Turns and reads)* No, I was sent to get something worth while.

DURKIN. I've always told you I wanted you—now I see Uncle wanted me to have you, too.

BETTY. I've always told you I didn't want you, and I don't know what Uncle wanted.

DURKIN. He was your guardian.

BETTY. Yes, and I always did what he asked.

DURKIN. His dying wish must have been for us to meet here alone to-night. *(Comes close to her)*

BETTY. If he wished that, he ought to die.

DURKIN. Oh, is that so. *(X to* C. *up stage)* How did you happen to come here to-night?

BETTY. I'm following instructions. I've made

up my mind to go through with it, but if this is the way it's going to turn out, I'm going to follow the chalk line right out that window. *(Starts for window, one step)*

DURKIN. *(Stops Betty)* No, you're not; you don't want to be left a pauper, do you?

BETTY. No.

DURKIN. Well, if he's left you money, you'll take what goes with it. *(Indicating himself—crosses right in front of table)* He always told me I couldn't have you.

BETTY. *(Comes center)* What makes you think he changed his mind?

DURKIN. I'll tell you. When his will was read, I was given a paper. I came here to-night to follow the instructions in it. The old idiot has me chasing all over the house. *(The gong rings—both turn away to look at wills—they must give a full view of center door)*

BILLY. *(Crosses stage—between French window and center door, carrying a coal shovel)*

DURKIN. He has timed every move, but it's coming out all right. I've found you and it's going to lead me to that pile of money.

BETTY. It's going to lead me to the insane asylum.

DURKIN. Now you're coming with me, because I'm not going to lose sight of you. *(Comes to her, center)*

BETTY. Which way are you going? *(The gong rings—they both turn and look at wills.* BILLY *crosses back of center door with a coal scuttle)*

DURKIN. At one o'clock follow a line to that door, then I go to the roof.

BETTY. *(Reads)* I'm not going your way. *(X up stage)*

DURKIN. Yes you are, because I'm going to make you. *(Takes one step towards her)*

BETTY. *(Turns* C.*)* Did you have any love for your uncle?

DURKIN. No, I hated him, but he didn't know it.

BETTY. You forged his name once.

DURKIN. Yes, but he let me off—he liked me, that's all.

BETTY. And you really think he forgave you for it?

DURKIN. Why, of course he did, or he would not have sent me here to-night to get this money, and had you here for me at the same time, eh?

BETTY. Maybe you're right, but he must have had an awful grudge against me.

DURKIN. We're alone here, and that's the way I've always wanted you. Come here, Betty, I want a kiss. *(Takes hold of* BETTY*—is about to kiss her. Gong rings one—both look at wills)*

BETTY. *(X to* L. I. *Raps three times—raps returned—*DURKIN *starts)* Next time be sure you're alone.

DURKIN. Is there someone else here?

BETTY. You can't prove it by me, but you'd better be on your way to the roof.

DURKIN. *(Looks at paper)* Yes, I can't lose that money. *(Exits up to* C. D. *and exits left)*

BETTY. *(Looks at paper, starts for* L. I, *looking at floor—turns right, follows line right)*

BILLY. *(Enters* L. I, *looking at floor, following line; bumps into* BETTY C.*)* Well, bless my soul, Betty.

BETTY. Hello, which way are you going?

BILLY. What?

BETTY. No, no, I mean—what I was going to say was I—I—hello——

BILLY. What in the world are you doing here?

BETTY. *(Starts as if to tell him—stops)* I'm not supposed to tell.

BILLY. Suppose I guess?

BETTY. Well, *I couldn't* stop you.

BILLY. You're trying to get at the bottom of something.

BETTY. Well, I've been to the top. I may go to the bottom next. Just a minute—I'll see. *(Reads)*

BILLY. Gee, I hope you're going my way.

BETTY. So do I.

BILLY. You do. *(Goes to her—*BETTY *puts out hand, stops him)*

BETTY. If you were, I'd let you go for me, and I'd wait here.

BILLY. Oh! *(Cross* R.*)*

BETTY. Are you allowed to tell what you came for?

BILLY. No, but I can tell you what you came for.

BETTY. Can you? Then what?

BILLY. You're following the directions of Mr. Winston's will, aren't you?

BETTY. *(Goes as if to tell him—stops)* I'm not going to say yes or no, but I'll bet that's why *you* came. What do you think you're going to find?

BILLY. I don't care whether I find anything more. *(Goes to take her in his arms)*

BETTY. *(Stops him)* Did you like your uncle?

BILLY. I should say I did.

BETTY. I loved him—he was about the only father I ever knew.

BILLY. Well, no father ever loved a girl any more and you can bet he's going to see you're looked after now that he's gone.

BETTY. I hope he's considered my feelings. Now if he wants me to marry your cousin Durkin——

BILLY. No—Durkin put him in a hole at one time and he let him off—he always said he'd pay him back some day. Now I don't think he'd turn

about and give him the dearest, sweetest girl in the world. *(They are about to kiss. Chimes ring)*

BILLY. *(Both turn, read paper)* Excuse me a minute. *(Cross* R. *Reads)* "Take the box from your pocket and hold it in front of you." *(He does it)*

BETTY. "You will find a small black box directly in front of you—take the key and open it." *(She opens box—turns away)*

BILLY. A ring—— *(Reads)* "Put it on the third finger of the left hand of the first woman you see." I saw you first! *(Puts ring on her finger. Reads)* "Now kiss her." I wonder if she'll let me—Well, I have to take a chance, uncle says so.

BETTY. *(Reads)* "Allow yourself to be kissed." *(*BILLY *crosses to her* C.*—finds her waiting to be kissed. They kiss. Reads)* "Follow the chalk line to your hall." *(X up stage to* C., *turns to* L., *turns again to* L. *to* C. *entrance, reads)* "Now follow on to the cellar." Billy, I'm getting at the bottom of it. *(Exits* R. I.*)*

BILLY. Give my regards to the coal bin. *(Looks at picture)* Uncle, you grand old man, you've made life worth living.

DURKIN. *(Off* L. I.*)* You don't say so.

BILLY. Good Lord! *(Turns to* R. *front of table)*

DURKIN. *(Enters reading)* "When you have said, 'you don't say so,' come to the center of the room." *(X to* C.*)*

BILLY. Hello, Durk!

DURKIN. *(Starts)* So you had to butt in too, eh?

BILLY. I'm here, if that's what you mean.

DURKIN. Now I know uncle was crazy. Do you know that Betty's here? *(Comes* R. *to him)*

BILLY. Yes.

DURKIN. Did she come with you—did she? Well, she won't go away with you.

BILLY. Why?

DURKIN. Because she's going with me—now take my advice and get to the end of your business here as quick as you can.

BILLY. *(Turns, looks at will)* I don't even move till 1:30.

DURKIN. Oh, you're in on the will too, are you?

BILLY. I'm in on the preliminaries.

DURKIN. That's as far as you'll get. He wouldn't leave you anything. You're on the wrong side of the family.

BILLY. Well, you're on the right side—you ought to get it all.

DURKIN. You bet I will. *(X to* L., *stops at end of* BILLY'S *speech with a quick turn)*

BILLY. You took some of it *before* he even died, didn't you?

DURKIN. What do you mean?

BILLY. Why, that check you——

DURKIN. Don't you ever mention that again or—— *(Reaches for gun. Gong rings. Both look at papers)*

BETTY. *(Enters* C., *carrying large money bag, places it on table)* There it is, all Mr. Winston owned—turned into gold.

DURKIN. *(Starts for money.* BETTY *has her hands on bag—*DURKIN *puts his hands on top of hers—*BETTY *throws him off)*

BETTY. Wait a minute, does it say anything there about you grabbing it?

DURKIN. *(Turns and looks at will)* No, but you can bet I'm going to get what's coming to me.

BETTY. That was his motto—— *(Points to picture)* Everybody'll get what's coming to them.

DURKIN. *(To* BILLY*)* Well then, you know

what's coming to you, don't you? *(Coming down stage, rolls up sleeve)*

BILLY. No, I haven't looked that far ahead. Is that in there? *(Looks at will)*

DURKIN. It's a good thing we've all met here to-night—now we can settle this thing once and for all.

BETTY. Let uncle settle it.

DURKIN. *(Back of* BETTY—*Over her shoulder)* But first I want to tell you, as I've always told you, you belong to me.

BETTY. You'll begin to believe that after a while.

DURKIN. I'll always be where you are—if you marry another man, I'll kill him. *(Slaps hand on table, looks at* BILLY*)*

BETTY. I'd love to be a widow.

BILLY. Yes, that would be nice—— *(Starts)* What? It was my uncle's greatest wish to see her happy——

DURKIN. Yes. *(X to* C.*)*

BILLY. I guess he must have figured out the way before he died.

DURKIN. Sure he did—he knew the way it had to be, because I told him I'd make her life miserable if she didn't marry me. *(Points finger at her)*

BETTY. *(Points finger at him)* And I told him you'd make it miserable if you did.

DURKIN. What's that on your finger?

BETTY. You mean my finger nail?

DURKIN. No, I mean that ring—who gave it to you?

BILLY. I did.

DURKIN. *(Laughs)* Well, that's funny.

BILLY. *(Imitates his laugh)* It was funny to me too, but there's a lot of funny things going on here.

DURKIN. All right, go ahead and get married. *(Up to* C. D.*)*

BETTY. Oh, isn't he nice—we have his consent. *(To front of table)*

DURKIN. *(Comes back down stage to them)* But I'll come to live with you just to keep you company.

BETTY. That'll be nice.

BILLY. Oh, that will be lovely.

DURKIN. What are you going to live on?

BETTY. Oh, bacon and eggs for breakfast, soup, fish and meat for dinner and——

DURKIN. What do you buy it with?

BETTY. *(X back to table—points to bag)* This, I guess.

DURKIN. Well, I'm not taking any chances on this will, so I'll just make sure of my end to take this now. *(All get their hands on bag at same time)*

BILLY. You leave that alone.

DURKIN. *(Draws gun)* You don't think I'm going to let that out of my sight, do you?

BETTY. Do you think your uncle wanted you to have it? *(Gong rings—all leave bag. All look at papers)*

ALL. *(Together)* Yes, he did! *(All look at one another)*

BILLY. *(Follows chalk line in front of table to* C., *turns up stage.* DURKIN *is standing on line. Shoves him)* Oh, get off the chalk line. *(Exits* R. 3*)*

BETTY. *(Follows line to left.* DURKIN *is standing on it)* Oh, get out of my way. *(Exit* L. 1*)*

DURKIN. By Jove, it's all coming my way. *(Reads)* "Put the bag out the window and take it with you when you leave." *(Goes out window)*

BETTY. *(Enters* L. *with ticket)* A ticket to

South Africa. I wonder what that's for. *(Reads)* "Give it to the first man you see."

DURKIN. *(Enters through window)*

BETTY. Well, he looks like a man—I'll give it to him. *(Gives ticket to* DURKIN; *he looks at it)*

DURKIN. Betty, we're going to live in South Africa.

BETTY. Do we both go on the one ticket?

DURKIN. Don't worry—another one will turn up.

BETTY. Where do you think Billy will go?

DURKIN. He can go to——

BETTY. That'll be much warmer than South Africa.

DURKIN. You don't think I'd let him have you, do you?

BETTY. You should be satisfied you got the money and a ticket out of the country.

DURKIN. I'm satisfied, but I'm waiting for your ticket. *(Crosses in front of desk)*

BILLY. *(Enters* C. *with two tickets, reads)* "Keep one yourself and give one to the first woman you see." Here, woman—— *(Gives ticket to* BETTY*)*

DURKIN. *(Comes between them)* Ah, there's your ticket now.

BILLY. I've got one, too.

DURKIN. To where?

BILLY. Coney Island.

DURKIN. *(Laughs)* That's a good place for you. Betty's going with me.

BILLY. No, she isn't. *(Argument—ad lib)*

BETTY. Fight it out, boys, I've got nothing to say.

(All look at papers)

DURKIN. "Take the box out of your pocket and hold it directly in front of you."

BETTY. "Take the key and open the box you see in front of you——"

BILLY. "Watch carefully what this box contains." *(*BETTY *opens box,* DURKIN *takes out revolver)*

DURKIN. *(Reads)* "Give the revolver you brought *with* you to the first woman you see." *(Takes gun out of hip pocket and gives it to* BETTY. DURKIN *keeps the gun he takes out of box, they both turn and point guns at* BILLY*)* Looks like uncle wasn't taking any chances with you. *(*BILLY *crosses to* C. *reading, sees guns, turns* R.*)*

BILLY. Wasn't that nice of uncle.

DURKIN. Now we're going. *(Takes* BETTY *by arm)* Come on.

BETTY. Don't be so previous—why don't you wait?

DURKIN. I've got all I want, you and the money, come on.

BILLY. Take your hands off her. *(Reading paper)*

DURKIN. *(Looks at paper)* No.

BILLY. Then I'll make you. *(Starts for him—back of table)*

DURKIN. *(Fires at him—*BILLY *falls back of table)*

BETTY. *(Screams)* What have you done?

DURKIN. Just what uncle told me to—read it. *(Shows her paper)*

BETTY. Nevertheless, you're a murderer, and I'm a witness to it.

DURKIN. Yes, but you won't tell—we'll be in South Africa before anyone knows. *(X front of table)*

BETTY. Do you think I'd go with you?

DURKIN. I know you will. Uncle put this in my hand to have that done—now you're coming if

I have to take you at the point of it. *(Starts to raise gun—*BETTY *covers him first.)*

BETTY. But don't forget uncle put one in my hand, too. *(Covers him with gun)* Now, there's just one chance for you—you're a murderer; get out of the country or I'll tell the truth and——

DURKIN. You wouldn't!

BETTY. Wouldn't I? I'd be only too glad. I've scarcely known a happy moment since I first saw you, but I'm going to find happiness now, because I'm never going to see you again. If you ever come back, I'll send you to the chair.

DURKIN. No, no—I only did what uncle told me to.

BETTY. That would be a poor excuse in court. You've only got one chance—go away—leave that gun beside him, I'll say it was suicide.

DURKIN. *(Drops gun)* You will?

BETTY. Yes. *(*DURKIN *goes above* BILLY, *puts gun beside him)*

DURKIN. I don't know what the old fool meant by it all.

BETTY. That can't matter now. Take the bag with you, get the first boat for South Africa and never come back again.

DURKIN. *(Comes to her)* And you promise not to tell?

BETTY. I promise!

DURKIN. *(To* C.*)* Well, I'm glad I got him—anyway, this is the last you'll ever see of me. *(Exits through window)*

BETTY. *(Crosses up to window, looks after* DURKIN—*long pause)*

BILLY. *(Still lying on floor)* Has he gone?

BETTY. Yes, he's gone, get up.

BILLY. *(Sits up, looks at will. Reads)* "You

are not dead." *(Rises, comes to* L. *feeling himself, etc.)* That's one part of this I didn't like.

BETTY. How wou'd you like it if he used this one? *(Shows other gun)* It has real bullets in it.

BILLY. *(Lays gun on table)* I'm glad he didn't get them mixed.

BETTY. *(Reads)* "It was the only way, children. Now Durkin will never bother you again. Don't be sorry, he took the bag—it was only full of pennies.

BILLY. We should be pretty happy, Betty, even if we didn't have any money. We have us and——

BETTY. And two tickets to Coney Island.

BILLY. Is yours to Coney Island, too? *(Both sit on settee under picture)* Thank you, dear old Mr. Winston—you've made us happy, even if you didn't leave us a cent.

(Chimes ring 2—sound of machinery working behind picture. The string is pulled, opening the bottom of picture, a pile of loose bills fall over them. BILLY *and* BETTY *look at all the money.)*

BILLY. Betty, look at all the money.

CURTAIN

*(Second Curtain—*BETTY *holding dress,* BILLY *pulling money in it.)*

PROPERTIES

Old fashioned furniture.
1 Library table (with drawer).
2 Settees.
1 Ladies' writing desk.
3 Chairs.
Grandfather's clock.
1 Small table with lamp on it.
2 Pedestals with palms.
1 Large coal scoop.
1 Coal scuttle.
4 Sofa Pillows.
3 Wills, the regulation size, with blue covers and three sheets of legal paper in each.
2 Shure-fire revolvers.
Blank shells for revolvers.
1 Small box in which a revolver will fit.
1 Ring box.
1 Ring.
1 Small key, supposed to fit both the boxes.
1 Cloth bag, supposed to be filled with gold. It should be 8 or 10 inches high and be tied with red tape at the top and sealed with a red seal.
1 Gong and padded hammer to strike it.
2 Small railroad tickets.
1 Long strip ticket or steamship ticket.
1 Lock.
1 Picture of an old man in a shadow frame. This picture should be 20 by 30. See diagram.
200 Pieces of stage money.
Several old-fashioned pictures.

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Comedy in 3 acts. By Mary Kennedy and Ruth Hawthorne. 6 males, 6 females. Modern costumes. 2 interiors. Plays 2½ hours.

The characters, scenes and situations are thoroughly up-to-date in this altogether delightful American comedy. The heroine is a woman of tremendous energy, who manages a business—as she manages everything—with great success, and at home presides over the destinies of a growing son and daughter. Her struggle to give the children the opportunities she herself had missed, and the children's ultimate revolt against her well-meant management—that is the basis of the plot. The son who is cast for the part of artist and the daughter who is to go on the stage offer numerous opportunities for the development of the comic possibilities in the theme.

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Melodrama in 3 acts. By Eleanor Robson and Harriet Ford. 8 males, 3 females. 2 interiors. Modern costumes. Plays 2¼ hours.

"Philip Vantine has bought a rare copy of an original Boule cabinet and ordered it shipped to his New York home from Paris. When it arrives it is found to be the original itself, the possession of which is desired by many strange people. Before the mystery concerned with the cabinet's shipment can be cleared up, two persons meet mysterious death fooling with it and the happiness of many otherwise happy actors is threatened" (Burns Mantle). A first-rate mystery play, comprising all the elements of suspense, curiosity, comedy and drama. "In the Next Room" is quite easy to stage. It can be unreservedly recommended to high schools and colleges. (Royalty, twenty-five dollars.) Price, 75 Cents.

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PALS FIRST

Comedy in a prologue and 3 acts. By Lee Wilson Dodd. 8 males, 3 females. 1 interior, 1 exterior. Modern costumes. Plays 2½ hours.

Based on the successful novel of the same name by F. P. Elliott, "Pals First" is a decidedly picturesque mystery play. Danny and the Dominie, a pair of tramps, enter a mansion and persuade the servants and friends that they belong there. They are not altogether wrong, though it requires the intervention of a judge, two detectives, a villain and an attractive girl to untangle the complications. A most ingenious play, well adapted to performance by high schools and colleges. (Royalty, twenty-five dollars.)

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